

## The Annual Ball of the Veiled Prophet

### THE QUEEN AND HER ATTENDANTS

### MATRONS OF HONOR.



THE VEILED PROPHET.

His twenty-third annual pilgrimage to the city of his beloved people is ended. Between dusk and midnight he reigned supreme—this gracious, jovial dispenser of good cheer—and all St. Louis rang with the mirth of his loyal subjects. It seemed as if the gay throngs that greeted him were bent on making the last carnival night of the Nineteenth Century a memorable epoch in the city's history.

It seemed that all of St. Louis was on hand to welcome the coming and speed the parting of his Myrtle Majesty. The half of a new-born moon looked down on a blaze of light that put her feeble rays to blush on crowds that surged along high-ways like pent-up water through a mill-race, or the resolute tide through a narrow channel—on a moving panorama of the earth's people and products, unsurpassed by anything of its kind in the past, and seemingly unsurpassable.

Then came the ball—the greatest of balls in this Western country—on which the hoary old man of the moon could not look, and to which only the most favored of the Prophet's chosen people were bidden. For weeks maidens and matrons had been on the tip of expectancy. "Who shall be Queen?" was the all-absorbing question, and as there was not even a hint as to the Prophet's choice, expectancy became something akin to anxiety.

Not until the specially bidden maids had assembled in the ballroom were their names disclosed and their curiosity gratified by his Majesty's choice of Miss Susan Larkin Thomson to wear the crown and sway the scepter of the Kingdom of Love and Beauty.

Not until the blushing Queen had mounted the throne from which so many of Missouri's proud daughters have held sway did the ball really begin. Later, when the ball was at its height, while the city's fairest daughters and proud sons were paying the tribute of their admiration to the young Queen who had been chosen to rule over them for the coming twelvemonth, the author and patron of the brilliant scene quietly slipped from amid the revelers, and, calling together his myrtle crew, set out on the long journey back to his home in Wonderland. But the spirit of merrymaking remained, and as the hours wore on Terpsichore took up the scepter and led dance after dance until gray dawn peeped in through the open windows, and advancing day put to rout the gay gods of the night.

Then came a shifting of the scene, a hurrying away from the great ballroom, a rush for wraps, and in a trice hundreds of carriages were clattering out of the haunts of trade into the quiet boulevards, where the fortunate dwell.

A few brief minutes more for the whispered interchange of good-byes between the tired maidens and gallant beaux—a long-drawn sigh of content—and it was over.

**TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF THE PROPHET.**

The Prophet and his court reached the ballroom shortly before 9 o'clock. The distinguished party was formed in double column, and to the inspiring strains of a martial air began the grand triumphal march to the throne.

The shrill blast of a trumpet announced to the waiting crowd the approach of his Majesty, and there was a general rush toward the stairway and the hall, up and along which the distinguished visitor had to pass in order to reach the ballroom.

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turned it by bowing to the Reception Committee, and kissing his hand to a bevy of pretty girls, who were peeping over the marble balustrade at the head of the first flight of stairs.

Without further formality he proceeded straight toward his throne. His entrance into the ballroom was the signal for a second demonstration. Cheers filled the vast hall, while the band played "Hail to the Chief." Before taking his seat upon the throne the Prophet, followed by his entire retinue, marched around the hall, inspecting the elaborate decorations and bowing acknowledgment to the beaming of cheeks that greeted his every step.

Then surrender it back to the princely hand by which it was bestowed. Bowing her thanks for the great honor, the Queen then took her place at the left of the Prophet.

The proclamation, which is from the Prophet's own hand, reads:

"At the coming of our annual festival, it is meet that we should find a climax of our pleasures fitting the occasion and emphasizing a deeper, better, meaning of these, our delights.

"According to our custom, we come now to proclaim our Queen for the year, a Queen of Love and Beauty; for without recognition of these two, Love and Beauty, all else is naught.

"Our pageant has been splendid. This gathering in our honor is impressive. We have chosen the beauty of material things. In gathering together here all our faithful servants we have proved a bond between us all. We have shown by the splendor marking our progress through this beloved city, the great resources of a metropolis, the public spirit which makes a city great in all the realms of effort known to man.

"But the beauty of material things is as nothing if it is not the expression of a beauty of soul of those who make the progress. There is nothing good in this world, but in the hands of good men and there are no good men without good women for inspiration, for comfort, for refining away the roughness of character.

be her true pleasure, well, highly, nobly, lovingly, to represent and serve you."

**NOW THE BALL IS AT ITS HEIGHT.**

And now the wondrous Terpsichore, waved by an invisible hand above the throne of the Prophet, was the signal for the dance. The assembled guests under its magic influence were at once inspired with the spirit of revelry, and to the soft cadences of sweet music hastened to chase the glowing hours with dancing feet.

The white tarpsaulin spread over the broad expanse of the floor glittered under the myriad of electric lights like a snowy sail on a summer sea, over it floated a thousand couples, their bodies swaying gracefully, their feet keeping time with the enchanting music, sweeping here and there and in and out, and around each other, weaving all sorts of fantastic figures.

The Queen and her maids of honor held royal court in front of the throne, where hundreds of her subjects had gathered, eager and anxious to pay humble tribute and sound praises to their matchless beauty and loveliness.

To those who had gathered in the gallery to take a bird's-eye view, the scene presented was bewildering and bewitching. The sides of the hall were packed with masses of onlookers, the plain black and white of the men's conventional garb forming a rich contrast with the varied gowns worn by the women. Diamonds glittered and glistened like crystals of snow under a winter moon, while the flutter of fans in the distance was as fairy-like as a legion of butterflies in a field of flowers. Mingled with the music rose the perfume of sweet-scented blossoms, carnations and roses. The large fountain in the center of the hall, bedecked with palms, potted plants and ferns, rose majestically upon the view like a tower of love set in the midst of this breathing mass of mirth and pleasure.

When, for a time, the music ceased, a momentary lull appeared to fall upon the dancers, followed at once by an incessant buzz of voices, intermingled with merry peals of laughter. Then, too, soft eyes looked love to eyes and many a whispered word was spoken which sealed forever the labors of beauty to the women.

Again the signal for the dance arose and gallant beaux rushed forth and thither, threading their way through the many labyrinth of beauty to claim the fulfillment of coveted engagements. It was the waltz.

Edging waiters to the more melting tune, low Irish jig and ancient rhapsody. Scotch reels, waltzes and country dance forego your future claims to the moving multitude encircled the base of the fountain until it appeared the vortex of a whirlpool of revelry and enchantment. Just, jollity, laughter and merriment prevailed on all sides. The Prophet's subjects were there to do him honor, to weave chaplets of smiles for his chosen Queen and her court of lovely maidens and proud matrons. They were there to make high carnival at the

midnight hour, to revel in visions of love and beauty, to fill the air with music and let the soul drink in the pure, sweet pleasures of unalloyed happiness and good cheer. And then his Majesty's proud, his noble spirit, fresh from the fastnesses of the Himalayas, hovered over the festive scene until the morning star hung out his silver light in the East and the last of the belated revelers had departed.

**DECORATIONS ON AN ELABORATE SCALE.**

From basement to roof, outside and in, the great gray Merchants' Exchange was decked out in holiday attire in honor of the Prophet's visit. A stranger in the city would never have guessed that on every other day of the year, save Sundays, the massive structure is dominated by that stern commander, business, and that only once in each twelvemonth does the hard taskmaster lay aside the implements of commerce and make one whole "night of it" under the irresistible influences of Cupid and Terpsichore.

The white marble arcade, running through from Pine to Chestnut streets, below the level of the pavement, was transformed into a garden of palms and other rare plants that would have adorned the palace of some luxurious King at the Tropics. Not a suggestion of the daily uses to which the place is put was visible. Wheat and corn, oats and barley, good enough in their way, had no place in the scheme of color, and as for flowers, and telegraph instruments, blackboards and the like—they would have looked as much out of place amid the tropic foliage as a grocery store in the center of Paradise.

In former years the main ballroom had received most care from the florist and decorators, but this was not the case this time. The ballroom was even prettier than last year, but Mr. Buschke reserved his rarest plants for the grand stairway, the arcade and the main lobby.

The most striking thing on entering the ballroom, from either side, was a thick carpet of palms, ferns and rubber plants, in which, half hidden by the foliage, stood a monster oak, the monarch of the glen.

In the ballroom there was no especially marked effort at novelty, and in most respects the decorations were similar to those of last year, though a shade more elaborate. The masterpiece of the room was the fountain, which never before was so artistically banded and draped with potted plants, cut flowers, drooping vines and velvety moss. Not less than fifty varieties of choice plants, many in fine bloom, were banded on the three ledges of the fountain. Over and through these smilax, asparagus, mistle-toe, ferns and other clinging, drooping, feathery, flowery were draped. From between the brilliant blossoms and waxlike leaves twinkled hundreds of small incandescent lights, and over the whole fell a crystal spray that trickled down the fair faces of full-blown roses, glided on each tiny leafpoint, and fell in a tinkling shower to gladden the gold-fishes, who seemed to be holding a

carnival of their own in the wide basin below.

Immediately opposite the main entrance and partially hidden by the fountain was the Prophet's throne, rich in color, Oriental in design, commanding every inch of the hall. But for two enormous silk cushions of old glory which formed the background one might easily have been convinced that he stood in the immediate presence of some fabulously wealthy Oriental potentate.

At either end of the hall were the music stands, one for a full brass band, the other for the orchestra. Above these were great shields bearing the seal of Missouri, and that of the United States, and set off by loops of tri-colored bunting and numerous flags.

Around the gallery red, white and blue bunting was artistically draped, and could here and there with small shields and flags.

Still higher up, almost in touch with the rafters, the walls were festooned with bunting in the Prophet's colors—yellow, red and purple. The capital of each column bore a shield and flag, and each panel in the lower walls was draped with two American flags.

To this elaborate display of color, this artistic draping of thousands of yards of cloth, this wonderfully beautiful and fairy-like fountain, and the soft light of incandescent electric lamps, one will have some idea of the beauty of the room.

**THE QUEEN AND HER ATTENDANTS.**

Miss Susan Larkin Thomson, chosen by the Veiled Prophet to rule as Queen over last night's festivities and over the realm of St. Louis society for the coming year, is the youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Thomson of Lindell boulevard.

White silk formed the undergown, covered with white chiffon, which, in turn, was veiled with the lace of a rare and beautiful pattern, the design being butterflies appliqued upon the net with delicate silk threads. A flight of butterflies covered one side of the skirt and outlining this, in accordance with the latest decree from Paris, were natural roses, arranged in graceful garlands. The bodice, cut low to display a perfectly rounded neck and shoulders, was very simply fashioned. The lace design was arranged to form a semicircle effect down the bouffant front, while the sleeves were merely short puffs of silk covered with lace. Clusters of roses again made their appearance on the bodice, caught on one shoulder. Miss Thomson wore no jeweled ornaments beyond the royal mantle bestowed upon her by the Veiled Prophet.

Miss Alice Orthwein, one of the three maids in attendance upon the Queen, is the daughter of William E. Orthwein of Portland place. Miss Orthwein is a brunette, whose delicate beauty has been much admired since her first appearance in society. Last evening she wore a stunning French frock of pale turquoise blue meteor crepe and Renaissance lace, the skirt pleated and tucked in the crepe, with a panel of lace down the front. The decollete bodice bore trimmings of lace and blue panne, the latter applied in gold.

Another of the three maids whose duty last evening consisted in attending the Queen was Miss Eloise Ware, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ware of Calumet. Miss Ware is a blonde, with beautiful ruddy hair. She wore ivory white silk and chiffon, the skirt finished with fluffy chiffon ruffles, and the bodice embroidered elaborately in seed pearls and silver passementerie. They puffed sleeves of the chiffon finished the waist, with chiffon pinnies about the low neck, bordered with silver and pearls.

Miss Elizabeth Warner, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Warner of Washington avenue, was the third maid of the inner circle. She is a really handsome young woman, whose frock of pale pink last night was extraordinarily becoming. Miss Warner wore a robe of Renaissance lace, in delicate pattern, made of pink tulle, which, in turn, was veiled in pale pink chiffon. Pinnies of the chiffon fell about the edge of the skirt and ornaments of the bodice, choix of pink panne also trimmed the gown, caught on the shoulders with small Rhinestone buckles. The bodice was finished with a soft drizzle of the panne and a buckle.

The three maids' frocks, of pink, blue and white, were a decided innovation from the customary white, which has invariably prevailed at former balls, and formed an admirable foil for the white gown of the Queen.

**MAIDS OF HONOR—THEIR COSTUMES.**

Following in the train of the Queen was an assembly of pretty maids in wondrously brilliant attire.

Miss Nellie Bagwell, who made her second appearance last night as maid of honor, since she served in 1898, respectively in 1898, wore a frock of palest green mousseline as